

Collection #s
M 0641
OM 0299

**VALENTINE NICHOLSON
PAPERS, 1841–1915 (BULK 1841–1890)**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 5 manuscript boxes, 1 oversize folder, 1 photograph folder

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive 1841-1915, Bulk 1841-1890

PROVENANCE: Theodore L. Steele and Brandt F. Steele, Indianapolis, IN, 22 September 1993

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: Meredith Nicholson Papers (M 0221), T. L. Steele Papers (M 0263), Valentine Nicholson Transcripts (M 0642)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1993.0674

NOTES: Transcripts of portions of this collection are contained in M 0642, Valentine Nicholson Transcripts.

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Valentine Nicholson (1809-1904), the son of Daniel and Elizabeth Nicholson, was born in Clinton County, Ohio. Nicholson was a member of the Society of Friends (Quaker) in his early life, but he withdrew from the faith because of his ardent abolitionist feelings, which were discouraged by the Friends. His abolitionist work included the housing of fleeing slaves from the south and the establishment of a free town hall and academy in Harveysburg, Ohio. Valentine Nicholson married Jane Wales and they produced three daughters, Elizabeth, Mary Ellen and Martha Nicholson McKay, wife of Horace McKay. The Nicholsons also experimented in communalism with their establishment of "Prairie Home," a farm near Urbana, Ohio that attracted "inmates" from Europe, the east coast, and the middle west. Nicholson was also interested in "Spiritualism" and was involved in séances. Nicholson later lived in Wayne and Marion counties in Indiana and died in his home on Broadway in Indianapolis.

The collection also contains a number of the papers of Nicholson's brother-in-law, Thomas N. Wales, fl. 1860s-1890s, who lived in Harveysburg, Warren County, Ohio, and who served in the Ohio state legislature.

Sources: Information in collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection centers around the correspondence and diaries of Valentine Nicholson and the correspondence of Nicholson's brother-in-law, Thomas N. Wales. Nicholson's papers include letters from family, friends, and associates regarding his personal, political, spiritual, philanthropic endeavors, and some legal and business matters, 1845-1892. Topics include Nicholson's involvement in the underground railroad and abolitionism, his experiment in communalism, and his involvement in spiritualism.

There also are personal letters to and from other members of Nicholson's family including his wife, Jane, and daughters, Elizabeth (Libbie), Mary Ellen, and Martha in Harveysburg, Ohio and Indianapolis, Indiana. These letters are chiefly family related in nature. There are a number of letters of a personal nature between Valentine and Libbie Nicholson. The collection also contains Nicholson's diaries, writings, and newspaper clippings. The diaries include daily happenings, meetings attended, and views on subjects of interest to him such as spiritualism and religion in general.

Also included are reminiscences of Valentine Nicholson and scrapbooks containing subjects such as abolitionism, literature, philosophy, and spiritualism, and an account by Martha N. McKay written in 1895 of Nicholson's trip east in 1843 to attend an abolitionist meeting. There is also biographical and genealogical information about Nicholson and his ancestors and hand-copied articles from publications, 1844. In addition, there is a handwritten manuscript by Nicholson containing information about Prairie Home including land information and names of those involved in the venture. Also included is a composition book containing Valentine Nicholson's record of séances he attended, n.d., and a scrapbook kept by Martha N. McKay, 1880s-1910s.

The collection also contains correspondence of relatives including the Wales, McKay, Adams, and Fallis families. Most of the letters involve correspondence to Thomas N. Wales, chiefly of Harveysburg, Warren County, Ohio, and Columbus, Ohio, and mainly are of a personal nature regarding family news, religious views, and general information, 1850s-1890s.

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BOX 1: Correspondence and Papers, 1841-1915

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Correspondence and Papers, 1859-1865	Box 1, Folder 3
Letter From Valentine to Libbie Nicholson, July 4, 1881	Box 1, Folder 4
Biographical Sketch of Valentine Nicholson, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 5
Reminiscences, August 7, 1894	Box 1, Folder 6
Nicholson Family Correspondence, 1854-1876	Box 1, Folder 7
Nicholson Family Correspondence, 1878-1915	Box 1, Folder 8
Nicholson Family Correspondence, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 9
Nicholson Family Letters to Thomas N. Wales, 1868-1898	Box 1, Folder 10
Wales Family Correspondence, 1854-1876	Box 1, Folder 11
Wales Family Correspondence, 1887- 1898	Box 1, Folder 12
Wales Family, General Correspondence, A-E, 1857-1898	Box 1, Folder 13
Wales Family, General Correspondence, F-N, 1849-1898	Box 1, Folder 14
Wales Family, General Correspondence, P-W, 1855-1896	Box 1, Folder 15
McKay Family Correspondence, 1864-1898	Box 1, Folder 16
Adams Family Correspondence, 1886-1898	Box 1, Folder 17
Fallis Family Correspondence, 1850-1887	Box 1, Folder 18
Hand Copied Excerpts From Publications, 1844	Box 1, Folder 19
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BOX 2: Scrapbooks, Spiritualism and Philosophy, n.d.

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Spiritualism, n.d.	Box 2, Folder 1
Spiritualism (2 scrapbooks), n.d.	Box 2, Folder 2
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Philosophy and Literature, n.d.	Box 2, Folder 4

BOX 3: Scrapbooks, 1880s-1910s

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Orson S. Murray Obituaries & Life, 1885	Box 3, Folder 1
Martha N. McKay Scrapbook, 1880s-1910s	Box 3, Folder 2
Loose Copies of Clippings Removed From Martha McKay Scrapbook, 1880s-1910s	Box 3, Folder 3
Family Photographs and Residences	Visual Collection: Photographs, Folder 1

BOX 4: Diaries and Writings, 1879-1910s

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Diary, 1879-1885	Box 4, Folder 2
Miscellaneous Pages From Diary, n.d	Box 4, Folder 3
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Poetry, n.d. (2 volumes)	Box 4, Folder 5
Writings and Newsclippings, n.d.	Box 4, Folder 6

BOX 5: Diaries, 1866-1895; Composition Book (Séances), n.d.

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Diary, 1866-1871	Box 5, Folder 1
Diary, 1876-1877, #1	Box 5, Folder 2
Diaries (2), 1870-1895 (Spiritualism) & 1876- 1877, #2	Box 5, Folder 3
Composition Book (Séances), n.d.	Box 5, Folder 4
Copies of Clippings Removed From Diary, 1876-1877, #1	Box 5, Folder 5